Office of the Inspector General

Kenneth S. Apfel
Commissioner of Social Security

Inspector General

Performance Measure Audit: Timely Issuance of Social Security Number Cards

The attached final report presents the results of our performance measure audit on the timely issuance of Social Security number cards (A-02-97-93003). The objective of our review was to assess the accuracy of the Social Security Administration's performance measure data for the timely issuance of original and replacement SSN cards.

You may wish to comment on any further action taken or contemplated on our recommendations. If you choose to offer comments, please provide your comments within the next 60 days. If you wish to discuss the final report, please call me or have your staff contact Pamela J. Gardiner, Assistant Inspector General for Audit, at (410) 965-9700.

David C. Williams

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this audit was to assess the accuracy of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) performance measure data for the timely issuance of original and replacement Social Security number (SSN) cards.

BACKGROUND

SSA's Customer Service Pledge states that, "If you request a new or replacement Social Security card from one of our offices, we will mail it to you within 5 working days of receiving all the information we need." Timely issuance of new and replacement SSN cards is also a Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) performance measure in SSA's Strategic Plan. For both Fiscal Years (FY) 1997 and 1998, SSA has a goal of mailing out new and replacement SSN cards within 5 working days in 97 percent of the requests. In FYs 1995 and 1996, 16.6 million and 16.7 million SSN cards were issued, respectively, with 13.2 million and 12.9 million issued through the Modernized Enumeration System (MES). The remaining SSN cards were issued through the Enumeration at Birth process.

SSA maintains two data bases containing information on the issuance of SSN cards: MES; and the Field Office Social Security Number Enumeration Report (FOSSNER). MES is the computerized system field offices (FO) use to take and process an Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5). MES features two modes of processing an application: the interview (on-line) and batch modes. The certification date, which appears in both modes of processing, signifies the start of the application process and is the date FO personnel processed the SS-5, reviewed the supporting documentation, and entered the data into MES. FOSSNER is a monthly report that provides information to FOs and various central office components on the processing of all Forms SS-5 taken through MES.

We reviewed SSA's process for issuing original and replacement SSN cards from the time of application to the printing and mailing of the cards. For the period June 2-6, 1997, we obtained a random sample of 500 Forms SS-5 out of a universe consisting of 257,352 Forms SS-5 that were processed by FOs nationwide. We compared the certification dates on the hard copies of the Forms SS-5 to the dates entered into the MES to ensure that the dates were accurately captured. Additionally, a 10 percent cluster sample of FOs nationwide were

contacted to ascertain how they processed Forms SS-5. We also analyzed the processing time for each step in the issuance of SSN cards from application to printing and mailing of the cards. The work was performed at the New York Regional Office with assistance from SSA Headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. The field work was conducted from April to November 1997.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

We found four major areas of concern:

- SSA DID NOT MEASURE THE FULL PROCESSING TIME FOR ISSUING SSN CARDS

- SOME OF THE CERTIFICATION DATES ON THE SSN APPLICATIONS DID NOT AGREE WITH THE MES CERTIFICATION DATES

  Projected Errors Number 35,000

  New MES Revision Could Result in More Discrepancies

- SSA's DATA BASE ALLOWED ZERO DAYS PROCESSING TIME

- SSA DID NOT MEET ITS PERFORMANCE MEASURE IN PROCESSING SSN CARDS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that SSA take the following corrective actions to improve the process of measuring the timely issuance of SSN cards:

- SSA should establish a method that captures the processing time for both the printing and mailing of SSN cards.

- FO personnel should be trained to help ensure that the certification date on the Form SS-5 is accurately entered into the MES.

- SSA should revise its interview and batch mode processes in the MES to accurately capture the time of certification.

- Application (FO and systems) processing time should be computed to reflect how long it actually takes to process an SSN request from certification date to assignment date.

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA agreed with two of our four recommendations. The Agency

noted the need for improvement in the input of certification
dates for SSN applications. SSA also stated that it will restore
the capability to enter a retroactive certification date in MES
after implementation of the Year 2000 systems release in
September 1998.

The Agency partially agreed with our recommendation to establish
a method that captures the processing time for both the printing
and mailing of SSN cards. SSA indicated that there was a method
in place that adequately captures the processing time, but that
improvements in the system could be incorporated. SSA disagreed
with our recommendation to capture the time of certification,
stating that it was not necessary to expand its interview and
batch mode processes in order to capture partial day processing
time. The Agency believes that the entire process of SSN card
issuance and delivery to mail operation is performed in less than
one day. The Agency defines the issuance date; i.e, the end of
the process, as the date the printed SSN cards are delivered to
the mail operation and not when the cards are delivered to the
post office.

OIG RESPONSE

SSA does not have an accurate system to measure the time from
certification of an SSN application to the time printed cards are
put in envelopes, postage applied, and the envelopes are
delivered to the post office. SSA's current system of
measurement understates the elapsed time for parts of the process
and does not measure other parts at all. We believe that the
implementation of the two recommendations the Agency agrees with
will improve the measurement of this important process. However,
we believe that the data will be inaccurate without the
implementation of our other two recommendations. Recording the
time and date at the beginning and the end of the entire process
will provide an accurate recording of the actual time needed to
process SSN cards.

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INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this audit was to assess the accuracy of SSA's performance measure data for the timely issuance of original and replacement SSN cards.

BACKGROUND

SSA's Customer Service Pledge states that, "If you request a new or replacement Social Security card from one of our offices, we will mail it to you within 5 working days of receiving all the information we need." Timely issuance of new and replacement SSN cards is also a GPRA performance measure in SSA's Strategic Plan. For both FYs 1997 and 1998, SSA has a goal of mailing out new and replacement SSN cards within 5 working days in 97 percent of the requests. In FYs 1995 and 1996, 16.6 million and 16.7 million SSN cards were issued, respectively, with 13.2 million and 12.9 million, respectively, issued through MES. The remaining SSN cards were issued through the Enumeration at Birth process.

SSA maintains two data bases containing information on the issuance of SSN cards: MES handles the application process; and FOSSNER maintains monthly nationwide statistics on processing requests for original and replacement SSN cards.

MES

MES is the computerized system FOs use to take and process an Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5). MES features two modes of processing an application: the interview (on-line) and batch modes. The interview mode allows FO personnel to process an application for an SSN card by obtaining information from the applicant and entering it into MES while the individual is present in the FO. The batch mode allows FOs to process a Form SS-5 by completing batch input screens for each Form SS-5 obtained without the applicant visiting the FO. FOs can process large numbers of mail-in Forms SS-5 at one time by quickly entering the required data into MES by using this mode. Some FOs also use the batch mode to process interview Forms SS-5 when there is a backlog.

The certification date signifies the start of the application process. It is the date shown on the bottom of Form SS-5 where FO personnel indicated that they reviewed supporting documentation and/or conducted the interview. The certification date on Form SS-5 is the date FO personnel should enter into

either the interview or batch mode when they begin to process the Form SS-5. At the time of our review, the certification date in the batch mode could be entered to reflect a retroactive date. The interview mode, which is used while an applicant is in the FO, did not have this capability.

Effective August 25, 1997, a revised version of MES, Release 3.0 was implemented to streamline the SSN application process and make the batch mode similar to the interview mode, with the additional capability of propagation of data. Propagation of data saves time and prevents data input errors by comparing the information entered into MES against SSA records for accuracy. However, the revised version of the batch mode eliminated the data fields for retroactive certification dates that were in the previous version. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) issued an early alert, dated August 28, 1997, indicating that the absence of this field will impair SSA's ability to measure the time required to issue SSN cards (see Appendix B). SSA responded on December 8, 1997, and agreed with our assessment (see Appendix C). SSA stated that appropriate systems changes will be made to correct the batch screen as soon as other priority systems work is completed.

FOSSNER

FOSSNER is a monthly report that provides information to FOs and various central office components on the processing of the Form SS-5 from certification date to assignment and/or verification of SSN. Information from Form SS-5 is first entered into MES. MES provides data for FOSSNER to calculate the time it takes to process each Form SS-5. The FOSSNER report calculates the Form SS-5 workload and indicates the number of original and replacement applications processed and completed by the interview and batch modes during a particular month.
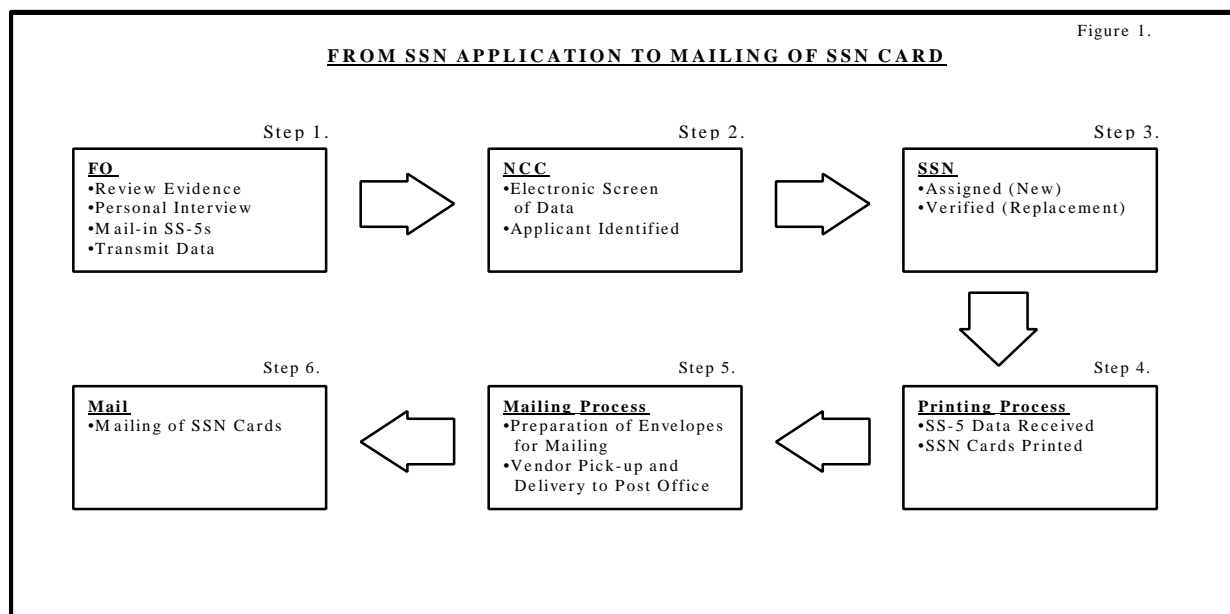
From SSN Application to SSN Card

An individual applies for an original or replacement SSN card either by visiting a FO and applying in person or by mailing the Form SS-5 and supporting documentation to a local FO. When an individual visits an FO, either an interview (on-line) mode input or batch mode input is made into MES utilizing the documentation furnished by the applicant. In most instances, the batch mode is used for mail-in Forms SS-5 (see Figure 1, Step 1 on the next page).

Once entered into MES, the information is then transmitted to the National Computer Center (NCC) (see Step 2). SSA then processes the application, where either an SSN is assigned (where no previous SSN has been issued) or is verified by the system (where a replacement card is requested) (see Step 3).

Approximately 60,000 SSN card print requests are processed each day. The SSN card is printed within 1 to 2 hours of the

verification and/or assignment of an SSN by the NCC. The
printing takes between 10-12 hours after receipt of the SSN card
print request to complete (see Step 4). After the card is
printed, it is prepared for mailing. The cards are put in trays
and then inserted in envelopes which are
bar-coded with a postage meter applied. The envelopes,
consisting of all SSN cards processed during the previous
24 hours, are picked up in the middle of the day (about 1 p.m.)
by an outside vendor. All mail is sorted by the vendor with the
next day's postage date on each envelope. The contractor is
obligated to deliver the envelopes to the post office by midnight
of the following day (see Step 5). The vendor is not permitted
to apply a new postage meter to the envelope with a new date
should the mail not be on time. The post office will not honor
mail with the wrong meter date on it.

Figure 1.

FROM SSN APPLICATION TO MAILING OF SSN CARD

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We reviewed SSA's process for issuing original and replacement
SSN cards from the time of application to the mailing of the
cards. For the period June 2-6, 1997, we selected and obtained a
random sample of 500 Forms SS-5 from FOs nationwide. During this
period, the universe consisted of 257,352 Forms SS-5 that were
processed by FOs. For the 500 Forms SS-5, we obtained copies of
496 from FOs nationwide. Four Forms SS-5 were not received
because they were unable to be located. Of the 496 Forms SS-5
received, 14 were excluded from our review for the following
reasons: 9 had no certification date; 4 were suspect, with
additional Immigration and Naturalization Service contact
required; and 1 was illegible. Of the 482 Forms SS-5 reviewed,
we compared the certification dates shown on the hard copies to
the certification date information maintained on an

MES data extract for this period. In analyzing our results, we used the entire
500 Forms SS-5 sample size and classified the 18 Forms SS-5 that we could not review as being acceptable for projection and estimation purposes.

We also obtained a 10 percent cluster sample representing 137 FOs nationwide. We contacted these offices by phone to obtain information on FO personnel use of the interview and/or batch modes in processing Forms SS-5 and inputting the information into the MES. The 137 FOs consisted of 59 Level 1 (formerly large District) offices, 51 Level 2 (formerly small district and branch) offices,
20 Level 3 (formerly small branch offices and large resident stations) offices,
2 Level 4 (formerly small resident stations) offices, and 5 teleservice centers. The FOSSNER data on these FOs was obtained to determine the volume of Forms SS-5 processed and the monthly interview and batch mode percentages.

We performed an analysis of the processing time for each step in the issuance of SSN cards from application to printing and mailing of the cards. Additionally, we reviewed the monthly FOSSNER data to determine the processing time between certification date to assignment/verification date. Since there were no data bases to capture the processing times for the printing and mailing processes, SSA personnel involved in each step of the process were contacted to assist us in estimating the time.

Based on information obtained in these contacts, we determined processing times for each stage in the issuance of the SSN cards.
 We also determined whether SSA complied with its performance measure goal as stipulated in its annual accountability report and its strategic plan during the time period under our review.

The work was performed at the New York Regional Office with assistance from SSA Headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. The field work was conducted from April to November 1997. Our audit was performed in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

In reviewing the data SSA used to measure performance on the timely issuance of original and replacement SSN cards, we found that SSA does not collect data for parts of the SSN card process. Additionally, we found that the data SSA used is inaccurate. We found four major areas of concern.

SSA DID NOT MEASURE THE FULL PROCESSING TIME FOR ISSUING SSN CARDS

We found that there was no measurement of the entire process to determine if SSA actually met its performance goal of mailing an SSN card within 5 business days of receiving all required information. While SSA had a measurement system for the time of certification to the assignment or verification of the SSN, SSA did not measure the time it took to print and mail the SSN card. The SSA monthly report (FOSSNER) only captured the time from certification of the Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5) to the assignment/verification of the SSN. After the SSN had been assigned/verified, no data base identified the time required for the printing and mailing of the card. We contacted SSA personnel, but they were unable to explain why SSA did not have a method to measure the entire process.

FOSSNER, which is over 10 years old, was revised in April 1990 to report on the application processing time captured by MES. However, when GPRA was enacted in 1993, FOSSNER was never revised to accurately measure the entire process from SSN card application to the mailing of the card. Therefore, it appears that SSA used the system in effect at the time without revising it to capture all of the information necessary to measure the entire SSN card application process.

Additionally, there is another part of the process not being measured before the time the Form SS-5 is certified. The Report of the Management Information Partnership Team issued in June 1996 noted that the SSN card process ". . . hides the number of days the fully documented application has been in the office." The report indicates that "the time to process the request begins not with the date the application is submitted initially, but with the date of certification." In our review, we did not measure the elapsed time from receipt of mail-in Forms SS-5 to the time the Forms SS-5 were certified. We could not determine how long it took to process the mail-in Forms SS-5. A potential gap in measuring processing time exists between the time SSA receives the required documentation by mail and the time the data is entered into MES.

SOME OF THE CERTIFICATION DATES ON THE SSN APPLICATIONS DID NOT AGREE WITH THE MES CERTIFICATION DATES

In 68 of 500 Forms SS-5 reviewed (13.6 percent), the certification dates on the hard copies of the Forms SS-5 were earlier than the certification dates shown on the MES data extract.

The discrepancies ranged from 1 to 12 days, as follows:

- 40 were discrepant by 1 day;
- 8 were discrepant by 2 days; and
- 20 were discrepant by 3 to 12 days.

There were 40 errors in the interview mode and 28 errors in the batch mode. We contacted FO personnel who made these errors to identify why they occurred. We determined that in 29 of the errors (43 percent), FO personnel did not realize that the certification date on the Form SS-5 was the date that should have been entered into MES. In another 39 errors (57 percent), FO personnel acknowledged incorrectly entering the date of input. Reasons for these errors included making mistakes, being uninformed and unaware that the correct date mattered, and making entries quickly without considering the entry of accurate information. In other cases, FO personnel used the interview mode, where the retroactive certification date couldn't be entered, instead of the batch mode.

Projected Errors Number 35,000

Projecting our results to the universe of 257,352 Forms SS-5 processed during the period under review, we estimate that there were 35,000 Forms SS-5 with certification dates different from the dates entered into MES.[1] The breakdown consists of the following:

- 20,650 Forms SS-5 discrepant by 1 day;
- 4,200 Forms SS-5 discrepant by 2 days; and
- 10,150 Forms SS-5 discrepant by 3 to 12 days.

New MES Revision Could Result in More Discrepancies

With the recent implementation of MES Release 3.0, there is a greater potential for discrepancies between the certification dates shown on the hard copies of the Forms SS-5 and the

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[1] The estimate of 35,000 errors was calculated by applying the 13.6 percent error rate from the 500 cases that we selected for review to the universe of 257,352 Forms SS-5 processed during the period of June 2-6, 1997.

certification dates entered into MES via both the interview and batch modes. On August 28, 1997, OIG issued an early alert to SSA management indicating our concerns over SSA's ability to measure the time required to issue SSN cards because the certification date in the MES Release 3.0 is shown as the date of data entry in both modes. Therefore, if an SSN application is taken 1 day but is not entered until the next day, the certification date in the MES would automatically be understated by 1 day. At the exit conference for this report, SSA personnel could not indicate when the MES revisions would occur. Moreover, they were unable to explain how the true time of certification would be accurately recorded in the interim.

SSA'S DATA BASE ALLOWED ZERO DAYS PROCESSING TIME

In our review and analysis of SSA's monthly FOSSNER report, we determined that when a Form SS-5 was certified, data was entered into MES, and the SSN was assigned on the same date, FOSSNER computed it as zero days processing time.

FOSSNER calculates average days for both FO and MES processing times to determine how long it takes to process an SSN application. FO average days is defined as how long it takes the FO to enter an application into MES. In the interview mode, if the date the application was certified and entered into MES is the same day, subtracting one date from the other equals zero processing days. System (MES) average days is defined as how long it takes the system to assign or verify an SSN. A computation is done by subtracting the date the application was entered into the system from the date the application was assigned a new SSN or the SSN was verified. Similar to FO average days, system average days processing time is calculated as zero days when the application is transmitted and the SSN is assigned or verified on the same day. We contacted SSA personnel to clarify the reason for using this formula but they were unable to explain the reason why these formulas were used to calculate processing times.

By using this method of computing FO average days and system average days, the overall average days (FO average days and system average days) for many Forms SS-5 are calculated as being zero days. In our sample, 395 Forms SS-5 (79 percent) had processing times stated as zero days. By using these formulas, SSA is understating the actual processing time for the Forms SS-5 and, therefore, understating the time it takes to process requests for SSN cards.

SSA DID NOT MEET ITS PERFORMANCE MEASURE IN PROCESSING SSN CARDS

Based on our review of 500 hard copies of Forms SS-5 processed during the period of June 2-6, 1997, we found that 20 had certification dates that were discrepant from the dates entered

into the MES by 3 or more days (or 4.0 percent of the sample
items reviewed). We analyzed the processing time from
certification date to mailing date and determined that it took
2.9 days to issue an original or replacement SSN card. Forms SS-
5 that are discrepant by 3 or more days when added to an
estimated processing time totaling 2.9 days would then take more
than the 5 days mandated by SSA's performance measure. An
additional 13 Forms
SS-5 (2.6 percent) did not have discrepant dates but were
processed in more than the mandated 5 days. Therefore, 33 of the
500 (6.6 percent) hard copies of the Forms SS-5 did not meet the
5 day requirement.

As stated previously, SSA did not measure processing time from
certification date to mailing date. Since there was no
measurement of the entire process, we made a determination of the
processing time based on discussions with SSA personnel familiar
with each stage in the process. Our estimates of processing
times were conservative since our determination included SSA's
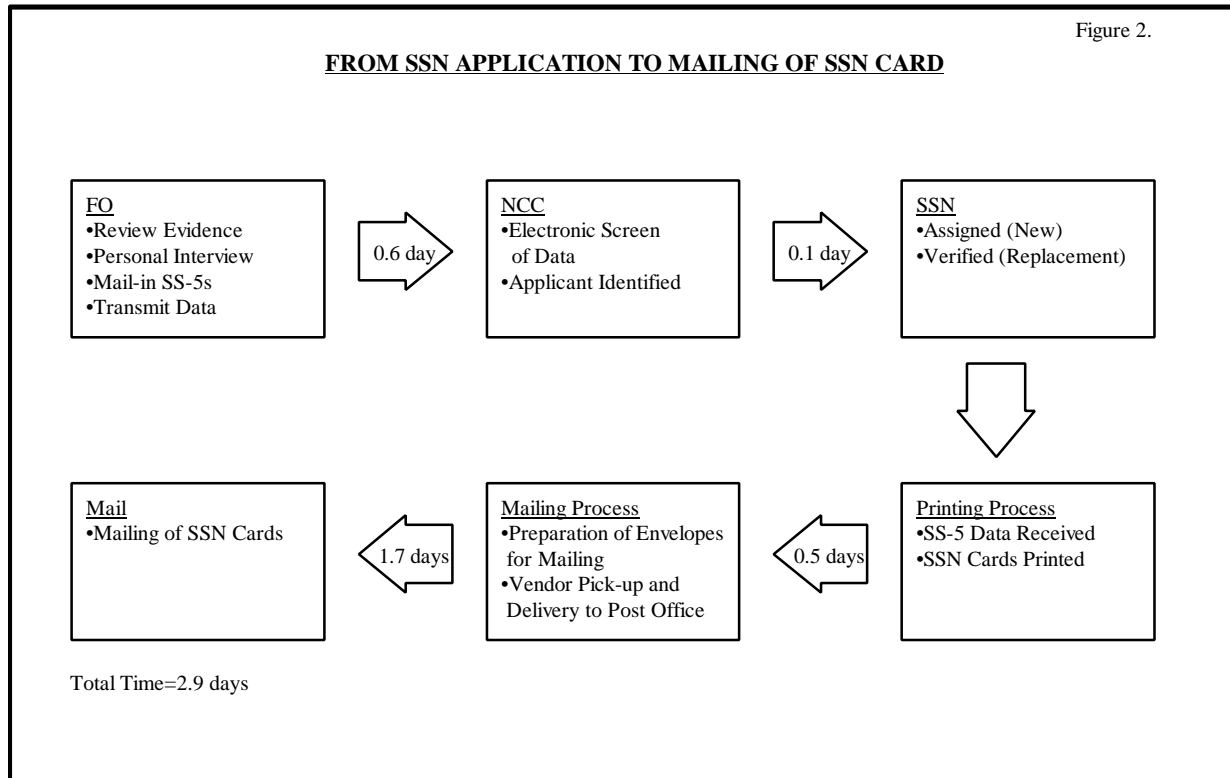use of zero days during the application process.

We determined the application processing time and estimated the
printing and mailing processing times as follows (see Figure 2 on
the next page):

- Application Process (totaling 0.7 days): Based on a review of
  a random sample of 500 Forms SS-5 obtained from FOs
  nationwide, for the week of
  June 2-6, 1997, we determined that average FO days totaled 0.6
days and
  average systems (MES) days totaled 0.1 days, for a total
application processing
  time of 0.7 days. (This calculation includes the use of zero
days processing
  time.) The June 1997 monthly FOSSNER, prior to the recent MES
revision,
  indicated average FO days totaling 0.3 days and average
systems (MES) days
  totaling 0.1 days, for a total application processing time of
0.4 days.

- Printing Process (totaling 0.5 days): This includes the
  printing of the SSN card within 1 to 2 hours of the
  verification and/or assignment of an SSN by the NCC. The
  printing takes between 10-12 hours of receipt of SSN requests
  to complete.

- Mailing Process (totaling 1.7 days): The mailroom receives
  boxes containing the SSN cards and logs their receipt. The
  log contains information on date received, expected and actual
  release dates. Prior to January 1, 1998 the log did not
  indicate how long it took to process the cards for mailing
  since actual release dates were not included in the log. The

log-in sheet procedures have been revised effective January 1,
1998 to include the release dates. Accordingly , review of
the revised log-in sheets disclosed that the logs did not have
the actual release dates to the vendor which would indicate
the mail room processing time. Additionally, in some
instances, the expected release date was more than one day.

After logging the cards in, the cards are put in trays,
inserted into envelopes, bar-coded and a postage meter applied
to the envelopes (estimate 0.3 days).

The vendor picks up the envelopes with the SSN cards processed within the last 24 hours (0.5 day estimate). The vendor delivers the envelopes to the post office within approximately 22 hours (estimate 0.9 days).

Figure 2.

FROM SSN APPLICATION TO MAILING OF SSN CARD

FO
•Review Evidence
•Personal Interview
•Mail-in SS-5s
•Transmit Data

0.6 day

NCC
•Electronic Screen of Data
•Applicant Identified

0.1 day

SSN
•Assigned (New)
•Verified (Replacement)

Mail
•Mailing of SSN Cards

1.7 days

Mailing Process
•Preparation of Envelopes for Mailing
•Vendor Pick-up and Delivery to Post Office

0.5 days

Printing Process
•SS-5 Data Received
•SSN Cards Printed

Total Time=2.9 days

Based on our review, 33 of the 500 Forms SS-5 were discrepant by 3 or more days. Accordingly, 6.6 percent of the Forms SS-5 processed during the period under review did not meet SSA's performance measure of processing an original and replacement SSN card within 5 business days of receiving all required information. To meet this goal, SSA should have 3 percent or less that did not meet its performance measure. Our estimate for the data we received shows SSA did not meet the performance goal of 97 percent for the week we reviewed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conditions noted in this report indicate that SSA does not have a system that accurately measures its performance in issuing new and replacement SSN cards. Accordingly, we recommend that SSA take the following corrective actions to improve the process of measuring the timely issuance of SSN cards:

1. SSA should establish a method that captures the processing time for both the printing and mailing of SSN cards.

   It is currently not possible to accurately measure the time required to print and mail SSN cards. SSA should measure both the printing and mailing processing time if it is going to be able to report on performance for this important customer service pledge. MES should be revised to capture the processing time from the application for a SSN card to the mailing of the card.

2. FO personnel should be trained to help ensure that the certification date on the Form SS-5 is accurately entered into MES.

   Many of the FO personnel contacted were unaware that the certification date on the SS-5 should be entered into MES. Training will ensure that the certification date on the Form SS-5 agrees with the information maintained by MES.

3. SSA should revise its interview and batch mode processes in MES to accurately capture the time of certification.

   MES should be revised to capture the time of day an SSN request is certified (or in the case of mail-in Forms SS-5 should have been certified) and assigned/verified. Recording the time and the date, rather than just the date, will provide an accurate measure of how long it takes for these processes.

4. Application (FO and systems) processing time should be computed to reflect how long it actually takes to process an SSN request from certification date to assignment/verification date.

   MES should contain a date field with the capability of entering retroactive certification dates in both the interview and batch modes.

   Additionally, when the mail-in Form SS-5 is received by the FO, it should be date-stamped in and that date should be entered into MES to indicate the date and time of receipt.

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA agreed with two of our four recommendations. The Agency noted the need for improvement in the input of certification dates for SSN applications. SSA also stated that it will restore the capability to enter a retroactive certification date in MES after implementation of the Year 2000 systems release in September 1998.

The Agency partially agreed with our recommendation to establish a method that captures the processing time for both the printing and mailing of SSN cards. SSA indicated that there was a method in place that adequately captures the processing time, but that improvements in the system could be incorporated. SSA disagreed with our recommendation to capture the time of certification, stating that it was not necessary to expand its interview and batch mode processes in order to capture partial day processing time. The Agency believes that the entire process of SSN card issuance and delivery to mail operation is performed in less than one day. The Agency defines the issuance date; i.e, the end of the process, as the date the printed SSN cards are delivered to the mail operation and not when the cards are delivered to the post office.

OIG RESPONSE

SSA does not have an accurate system to measure the time from certification of an SSN application to the time printed cards are put in envelopes, postage applied, and the envelopes are delivered to the post office. SSA's current system of measurement understates the elapsed time for parts of the process and does not measure other parts at all. We believe that the implementation of the two recommendations the Agency agrees with will improve the measurement of this important process. However, we believe that the data will be inaccurate without the implementation of our other two recommendations. Recording the time and date at the beginning and the end of the entire process will provide an accurate accounting of the actual time needed to process SSN cards.

OTHER MATTERS

INTERVIEW AND BATCH MODE PROCESSING ARE USED EQUALLY

SSA policy is to give FO managers the flexibility to use either the interview or batch mode to process SSN requests. We found that the size of the FO did not have an effect on which process was used. We found that both the interview and batch modes were used equally in Level 1 and 2 FOs. The small branch offices (Level 3) tended to use the interview mode more (13 out of the 20 FOs contacted) and the
2 small resident stations (Level 4) split evenly; 1 used the interview mode and
1 used the batch mode.

FO staff we contacted gave multiple reasons for using the interview mode rather than the batch mode. Sixty-three percent of the staff indicated that propagation of data, where information from the last SSN record was automatically transferred to the appropriate MES input screens, was the reason for the use of the interview mode. At the time of our review, only the interview mode allowed for the propagation of data. Fifty-eight percent of FO personnel stated that this mode provided for more efficient use of personnel and resources. Seventeen percent of FO personnel stated that the interview mode was more user friendly.

FO staff we contacted were also asked why some used the batch mode to process SSN card requests. Fifty-nine percent stated that the batch mode was better suited to process mail-in Forms SS-5. In other responses, they indicated that the batch mode promoted the efficient use of personnel and resources to accommodate large workloads (38 percent of the responses).

APPENDICES

SSA COMMENTS

EARLY ALERT

RESPONSE TO EARLY ALERT

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This audit was planned and initiated by Jack Molnar, a former
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For additional copies of this report, please contact the Office
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